

Are your appliances really “off”?



Even when you reach over and turn off your TV, coffee maker and stereo, they may continue using energy and costing you money. How? “Phantom” loads.

The “off” button on many of today’s electronic devices often doesn’t really mean “off,” it means “standby.” Small transformers remain on, drawing power even though you’re not actually using the device. The energy being used by these devices in “standby mode” is called phantom loads ... and they are costing you energy and money.

According to a report from Cornell University, the typical home contains about 20 phantoms, adding about \$200 to an annual energy bill. In fact, TVs with remote controls likely use more energy during the 20 hours a day they’re turned off and in a “standby power” state than they do during the hours you watch the tube.

Phantom loads account for up to 7 percent of our energy consumption, translating into wasted energy and money, and more stress on the environment.

Fast Facts

- In the average home, more than 50 percent of the electricity used to power electronics is consumed while the devices are turned off.
- Standby electricity accounts for 4 to 7 percent of total electrical consumption in Wisconsin homes — that’s four to seven cents for every dollar you spend on electricity.
- In the United States alone, phantom load costs consumers more than \$3 billion a year and adds up to the output of several full-size power plants.

Finding Phantoms

- Most electronics with remote controls, including TVs, DVD players, and audio equipment.
- Devices with a continuous digital display, like the glowing clocks on stoves.
- Appliances with rechargeable batteries, such as cordless phones.
- Externally powered electronics with transformers, such as inkjet printers iPods/mp3 players and cell phone chargers.

Fighting Phantoms

- Unplug all devices when not in use.
- Alternatively, plug your devices into a power strip and turn the strip off when you go to sleep.
- Buy ENERGY STAR® appliances to reduce your phantom load for devices that would be impractical to turn off.
- Tell others about this phenomenon known as phantom load. Chances are, they’ve never heard of it either!
- Watch out for the cube-shaped transformers that plug into the wall on small appliances; they’re 60-80 percent inefficient when plugged in, so it is especially important that these are on power strips.
- Lead by example. If you start turning off your devices, maybe your friends or family will too.

Helpful Links

Visit these sites to learn more about reducing your phantom loads and saving energy in general:

www.eere.energy.gov

www.focusonenergy.org

www.energystar.gov

www.energy.gov

www.eia.doe.gov

www.energy.ca.gov

www.consumerenergycenter.org

For more information

Call 24-Hour Customer Service at **800-450-7260** and visit wisconsinpublicservice.com/home for **Energy-Saving Tools & Ideas** and other resources.

